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**STATE SCHOOLS CHIEF ANNOUNCES SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN PERCENTAGE
OF ENGLISH LEARNERS REACHING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY**

SACRAMENTO – Nearly triple the percentage of the English Learners who took the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) last year were considered to have gained proficiency in English compared to the same students who took the test in 2001, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell announced today.

Analyzing results for the group of 862,004 English Learners who took the CELDT in 2001 *and* 2002, the California Department of Education (CDE) found a significant increase in the percentage of students scoring at the English proficiency levels of Early Advanced and above. A total of 11 percent (or 92,938 of the same students) attained proficiency levels of Early Advanced or above in 2001 compared with 32 percent (or 275,587 of the same students) at these levels in 2002 (See Attachment A).

This is the second year that the state has required school districts to assess all English Learners with one state-approved test during a specified period.

“California stepped up as the first state in the nation to require the use of one state test to identify and monitor English proficiency, and the results are extremely encouraging. Significant progress toward English proficiency is being made at every grade level,” O’Connell said.

“We still have a way to go to elevate all our English Learners to this level, but we certainly are heartened by these latest results,” said O’Connell.

Overall, 1,297,051 English Learners or about 21 percent of all students enrolled in California public schools last year took part in the second annual administration of the CELDT.

Findings show that 34 percent of the students taking the 2002 annual assessment scored Early Advanced or Advanced overall. Sixty-six percent scored Beginning, Early Intermediate, or Intermediate overall (See Attachment B).

The test results for schools, districts, counties, and the state are available on the CDE DataQuest Web site at <<http://celdt.cde.ca.gov>>.

Under state law, districts must use the CELDT for initial identification of all students whose primary language is not English and for whom there is no record of English language development results within 30 calendar days after they first enroll in a California public school. Districts also must give the CELDT annually to identified English Learners until they are reclassified as Fluent English Proficient. The testing window for the second annual administration was July 1, 2002 through October 31, 2002.

The CELDT aligns with state-adopted English Language Development Standards and covers listening and speaking skills for kindergarten and first grade, and listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills for grades two through twelve.

CELDT criteria for English language proficiency require students to attain a proficiency level of at least Early Advanced overall with each skill area at Intermediate or above. A total of 32 percent of English Learners taking the annual CELDT assessment met these criteria, compared to 24 percent in 2001 (See Attachment C).

Districts must implement a process for reclassifying English Learners to fluent English proficient. The State Board of Education has approved guidelines for reclassification. The CELDT is the primary measure for determining English fluency; other factors include teacher evaluation, parent opinion and consultation, and performance on the California Standards Test in English-Language Arts (part of the STAR program).

“This new test is shining a light on the language needs of our state’s growing population of English Learners,” O’Connell said. “The growth in the percentage of English Learners attaining English proficiency on the CELDT points to the outstanding efforts of our schools.”

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Attachments